

BACKGROUND

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is an economic stimulus package enacted in February 2009. A portion of these funds were allocated for education. This includes \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

Race to the Top will reward states that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate their reforms in the future. These states will offer models for others to follow and will spread the best reform ideas across their states, and across the country.

Race to the Top eligibility requirements include:

- Approval from the federal government of the state's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 State Fiscal Stabilization Phase II funding.
- No legal barriers at the state level to linking student achievement data to teachers and principals of evaluation.

The Race to the Top program priorities include:

- A **comprehensive** and **coherent** plan from the state built around four areas of reform:
 - Standards and assessments;
 - Comprehensive, longitudinal data systems;
 - Great teachers and leaders; and
 - Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

Additional priorities include:

- An emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math);
- Innovations for improving early learning outcomes;
- P-20 coordination/alignment; and
- School-level conditions for reform, innovation, and learning.



Race to the Top *Fact Sheet*

www.iowa.gov/educate

Iowa's Race to the Top Application

EXPANDING SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS. IMPLEMENTING GROUND-BREAKING REFORMS. SUPPORTING THE IOWA CORE CURRICULUM.

Iowa has an exciting and important opportunity to develop and fund innovative efforts to improve education throughout our state. That is why Iowa is leading an aggressive effort to apply for the highly competitive Race to the Top funds. This work may lead to millions of dollars for Iowa to support improvements and innovations in education over the next four years.

The Race to the Top fund will distribute billions of dollars in competitive grants from the U.S. Department of Education to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform.

What it means to Iowa

Potentially millions of dollars to support improvements and innovations in Iowa's education system over the next four years.

- A state's award will be determined based on a budget that matches the work in a state's grant application.
- Iowa is eligible to receive between \$60 million—\$175 million, although these are suggested ranges.

Iowa schools, as well as the state, could directly receive funds.

- Half of the funds awarded will go directly to local school districts, while the other half will help the Iowa Department of Education (DE) build the infrastructure to support statewide implementation.

Significant work goes into preparing a strong application for the highly competitive grant.

- Only a few states are expected to receive funding.
- Iowa must submit a nearly 400-page proposal by January 19, 2010.
- States that are not awarded in Phase 1 will receive feedback and can re-apply in round two. Phase 1 Applications Due — January 19, 2010; Announced: April 2010; Phase 2 Applications Due: June 1, 2010; Announced: September 2010.

Iowans working together to provide input and support our application.

- Parents, teachers, principals, school board members, and the associations that represent them are coming together as work teams and advisory groups to provide input on the application.
- The DE will make online surveys available to gather further input.
- Regional meetings and statewide webinars will be held to provide information, criteria for participation, and answer questions.
- Iowa school board presidents must sign a memorandum of understanding in order for school districts to receive funds. Supporting signatures from superintendents and teachers' association presidents strengthen Iowa's chances of receiving the grant.

Iowa will be able to support deeper implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum and the key work needed to help local school districts move forward in major reform areas.

What makes Iowa a strong competitor for funding:

An enhanced education data system

- Since 2004, Iowa has had a unique student identifier and requirements for districts to send data electronically to enhance data collection.

- In 2008, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) began developing the data warehouse, connecting education data from PK-12 to higher education.

The Iowa Core Curriculum

- The Iowa Core Curriculum was adopted by the State Board of Education in 2007 and 2008. Many of the processes and goals for developing the Iowa Core Curriculum parallel those being used in the development of the Common Core Standards Initiative.

Teacher and Administrator Quality

- Standards have been developed for teachers and administrators and are the foundation for the evaluation process.
- Evaluators must receive a license demonstrating competency every five years to evaluate educators on the standards.
- Teachers and administrators are evaluated every three years once they receive a standard license and are required to complete a professional growth plan annually with their supervisors.
- Mentoring and induction programs are in place for teachers and administrators.
- Iowa was recognized as one of the top three states in a recent RAND evaluation for leadership development and support.
- Iowa has an alternative teacher and principal preparation program and has revamped preparation programs.
- Iowa has a research-based professional development model that must be incorporated and implemented in district improvement plans.

Area Education Agencies

- Iowa has a network of area education agencies (AEAs) that provide a strong system of supports to local districts.

What is needed to provide an even stronger education system and application:

While Iowa has many strong points, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) has identified key areas that would support Iowa's Race to the Top application, allow school districts to apply for additional federal funds that will be released in the coming months, and contribute to education innovation. They are:

Removing the cap and repeal date for charter schools in Iowa.

Currently, Iowa Code has a 20 charter school cap and a repeal date for all charter schools on July 1, 2011. The DE is requesting removal of these restrictions.

The state is looking at ways to foster innovation in more schools without requiring a charter school designation.

Turning around Iowa's lowest performing schools. Race to the Top and forthcoming School Improvement Funds will focus on turning around the country's lowest performing schools. Each state must have in place a policy that allows a method for improving these schools. The DE has to have the ability to allow districts, where these schools are located, the authority to make personnel and oversight decisions to dramatically transform these lowest performing schools in order to access federal funds to support increasing student learning in these schools.

For more information on Iowa's Race to the Top application, please visit www.iowa.gov/educate.